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DALE FARM

PITSEA PRESS (EMAIL)

Travellers rekindle large-scale site plans

By Jon Austin

THE ECHO



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ILLEGALLY-CAMPED travellers have revealed plans to cement their presence in Basildon.

Pitsea residents have been horrified to learn proposals for a huge camp at Pitsea are back on the cards.

They thought they had seen the last of the scheme after their 5,000-name petition against it was sent to the Government.

advertisement

Now, eviction-threatened travellers at Dale Farm, Crays Hill, say they will soon seek permission to develop a 30 to 40-plot site near the A13 flyover and railway line at Terminus Drive, Pitsea.

Travellers' campaigner Graham Puxon said: "Our agent is preparing an application.

"This will almost certainly be refused by the council, but we believe it could have more success on appeal.

"It is not in the green belt and has been recommended by the Government as a suitable site."

Pitsea South East councillor David Abrahall, said: "This is totally the wrong location for a site and would not be compatible with the aims of the Pitsea masterplan to regenerate the area.

"Residents don't want it either. Five thousand names is one of the biggest amounts of local opposition I have seen in recent times."

One local woman in her 30s, from Chestnut Drive, who signed the petition but asked not to be named, said: "I am horrified.

"We thought this was all stopped. We need to arrange talks urgently to work out what to do. We do not want a site.

"Travellers have stopped there in the past and they have caused problems."

Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott once earmarked the site as a possible home for travellers facing eviction from Dale Farm.

But camp proposals for the land, owned by Government organisation, English Partnerships, appeared to have been dropped, after meeting opposition from [Basildon Council](#) and the 5,000 residents who signed the petition.

However, English Partnerships has never indicated the site was no longer available for travellers.

There remains nothing to prevent travellers putting forward a planning application - and

even if the council rejected it, the Government, would have the final say, on appeal. Travellers' campaigner Mr Puxon said: "The application should be submitted by the Dale Farm Housing Association within the next few weeks."

He added the housing association, set up by travellers last year, would seek to register as a social landlord, so it could claim Government funds to develop the site.

He said planning applications for smaller sites on green belt land owned by the travellers in Kennel Lane, Billericay, and Pond Farm, Crays Hill, were also likely to follow.

12:30pm Friday 9th March 2007